



How Does Learning Happen?

Leadership Lens

Belonging

Cultivating Authentic Relationships and Connections

Positive, caring and respectful relationships are the foundation for optimal learning for both children and adults. As leaders of early learning programs, reflecting on how we grow positive and trusting relationships with our team is essential for providing positive outcomes for children. Consider these questions for reflection:

How do I build trust and a sense of belonging with my educator team?

- In my practice what do I do in my daily work that demonstrates and grows belonging?
- How do I know when educators and families feel a sense of belonging? What do I feel and see?
- What are some stories that illustrate how I have built a sense of trust and belonging with my team? (What do I see specifically as a result of my efforts?)
- Are there other things I could think about doing to grow trust and a sense of connectedness among educators?

Core Values support the vision of our programs and shape the culture of the work we do. Values are essential to our identity as a program and as individuals. Workplaces that live to their values help create a sense of belonging among teams.

As a leader in our agency how do I bring the program's values into everything I do?

- In daily conversations with educators?
- In team meetings?
- In orientation and training processes?
- In my relationships with children and families?
- In mentoring team members?
- In short and long term planning?

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Engagement

Creating Contexts for Participation

In order for optimal learning to happen we need to be fully engaged in our work. How leaders engage with team members determines their willingness and ability to work to their best potential. *“The greatest leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things. He/she is the one that gets the people to do the greatest things.” Unknown*

Consider these questions for reflection:

How do I set the foundation for team engagement?

- What does it mean for you to be fully engaged in your work?
- How do you see educators fully engaged in their work? Are there differences in understanding? How do I negotiate these differences?
- How do I recognize and grow individual strengths and dispositions within my team?
- How do I provide structures for educators to lead from any chair?
- How can I delegate leadership tasks to strengthen skill development among my team?
- How do I provide meaningful experiences for educators that focus on growing skills?

How do I grow peer mentorships within the program?

- How are natural mentorships happening in our program?
- What components of these mentorships are making them successful?
- What dispositions do I notice in successful mentors? How can I nurture these dispositions in my team?
- What professional development, tools or resources might support the growth of mentorship within our program?
- Where are there opportunities for me to support and grow leaders among my team?

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Well-Being

Nurturing Well-Being in Staff

The physical and emotional well-being of staff has a direct impact on the quality of relationships we provide in our early learning programs. We cannot support healthy children if we do not take care of ourselves first. Educator well-being is a shared responsibility and workplaces play a role in setting a foundation for well-being. To have healthy programs we need to invest in our people. Consider these questions for reflection:

In what ways do I strive to offer a safe, accepting and fair workplace where staff can make their best contributions?

- What does a sense of well-being mean to me? What does it mean to my educators?
- What do I feel and see when I have a sense of well-being?
- How do I know when educators feel a sense of well-being? What do I feel and see?
- What structures do I have in place that provide a foundation for a sense of well-being?
- What health and well-being issues might be affecting our workplace? How might I address these issues?
- How are educator's ideas and needs incorporated into health and well-being planning?
- How do I prepare my educators for change? What supports and systems are in place?
- How do I recognize and celebrate my successes? My educator's successes?
- What tools/skills do I use to help myself self-regulate in the workplace? What areas might I consider for growth?
- How do I grow self-regulation skills among my educators?
- Are there other ways I can think about and support educator wellness?

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Expression

Fostering Communication through Expression

Open and honest communication is essential for successful relationships. Providing spaces where people have the opportunity to offer input, seek to understand new ideas and perspectives, and can express themselves in a way that is authentic to them supports building relationships and teamwork. Consider these questions for reflection:

In what ways do I provide structures for openness and expression between the staff and myself?

- What types of decision making processes do I use that encourage a sense of democracy?
- What types of frameworks do I have in place that allow educators to make decisions for their programs?
- How is everyone's voice included in the program? How is this visible in our work?
- How much time do I spend "Connecting: Directing: Correcting" educators? How can I improve my connections?
- What processes do I have in place for successful communication?
- How can I encourage educators to be curious and question their thinking, assumptions and practices?
- How do I cultivate a culture of reflective practice so that the learning of my team happens every day?